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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0117
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 3266
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0114
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1145
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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SUBJECT: ACEH: MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN GAM REINTEGRATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: After refusing for more than a year, GAM finally provided a list of ex-combatants to the government, paving the way for some reintegration payments to be made before the end of the year. GAM's providing names breaks the impasse, but persisting differences on land compensation, a major part of a settlement consistent with the MOU, will take longer to resolve. End summary.

Stalemate

¶2. (SBU) Finding a way to overcome GAM's refusal to provide the names of the 3,000 ex-combatants eligible for compensation has been the bane of Yusni Saby's existence. Saby, a respected intellectual and Muslim scholar, heads the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA) that oversees reintegration payments to persons affected by the conflict. Yusni recently confessed to being discouraged that previous BRA attempts to solve this problem did not work, and he opined there was no guarantee that the latest scheme would accomplish more than simply "spend the reintegration budget." The possibility either side would compromise no longer entered into his calculus.

¶3. (U) GAM's continued refusal to provide a list of names was rooted in several factors, including fear and pragmatism. Based on their experience in 2003, GAM leaders feared the military might us the list to target the ex-combatants if the peace process faltered. There was a practical problem as well: how to choose the names for the list.

¶4. (U) The Helsinki MOU used the GAM-supplied number of 3,000 combatants to calculate reintegration payments. According to GAM leaders now, however, the real number of ex-combatants is substantially higher, with some leaders claiming the total may be as high as 20,000. If the government made payments directly to the 3,000, GAM leaders feared, GAM would have nothing for the thousands of others.

Breakthrough

¶5. (SBU) At a Joint Forum meeting in October, however, GAM and GOI reached a compromise solution. GAM agreed to supply 3,000 verifiable names and BRA agreed to make payments to the individuals listed, but in a way that enabled local GAM commanders to gain control of the funds and redistribute them more widely. The key to the compromise: payment by

check.

¶ 16. (SBU) If the deal holds, BRA will prepare a check for each of the ex-combatants and distribute them at public ceremonies throughout Aceh. At the ceremony, each person receiving a check will endorse it and hand it over to the local GAM Commander for deposit into a central account. GAM leaders told us commanders plan to distribute 90 percent of the funds to ex-combatants in their districts and set aside 10 percent for future projects.

State of Play - Deal Mostly on Track

¶ 17. (SBU) Early in November, GAM provided the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and BRA with a list of nearly 3,450 ex-combatants. BRA checked the names and determined that approximately 2,500 of them qualified for payment. Although a final schedule has yet to be established, BRA aims to distribute the funds by mid-December.

¶ 18. (SBU) Sources in AMM, the provincial government, GAM and BRA told us that although the breakthrough was significant, it did not bring the issue to closure. Instead, it reopened disputes about the size and composition of the payments. BRA planned to pay IDR 25 million((USD 2,750)per combatant (IDR 10 million plus IDR 15 million in lieu of land). GAM representative^Z

akaria Salman argues that each ex-combatant is entitled to two hectares of "functional plantation" and that IDR 15 million is only enough to buy a small plot.

¶ 19. (SBU) Aceh Governor Mustafa threatened to block payments if GAM does not drop its demand for land. Former acting governor and current gubernatorial candidate Azwar Abu Bakar claims that GAM and the BRA previously agreed on

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compensation payments and that both GAM and the BRA are deliberately misinterpreting the agreement. The government, he said, did promise ex-combatants two hectares of land, but no one ever said it had to be two hectares of "palm oil ready to harvest." Abu Bakar believed Jakarta would not provide additional funding to meet this promise, leaving the problem for the provincial government to solve. (NOTE: The Helsinki MOU, section 3.2.5, states, "GOI will allocate suitable farming land as well as funds to the authorities of Aceh for the purpose of facilitating the reintegration to society of the former combatants." Section 3.2.5 a) says, "All former combatants will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security." END NOTE.)

¶ 10. (SBU) Officials in BRA and the provincial government told us despite the disagreements, a significant portion of the payments will likely be made in the coming weeks as part of a compromise plan. Under the compromise plan, each ex-combatant will be given a choice between IDR 25 million now or IDR 10 million now and a plot of land at some unspecified future date. The pressure for local GAM leaders to deliver something to supporters in their region is simply too strong for GAM to reject the deal outright, said one contact. Although they had not yet decided on their final course of action, GAM leaders acknowledged to us that they need to deliver something to their supporters in the field, and they need to do it quickly.

Further complications

¶ 11. (SBU) While GAM's providing the names of its ex-combatants is a substantial breakthrough, GAM has undermined its credibility by listing hundreds more names than the 3,000 they claimed in the Helsinki MOU. Ever since the MOU was signed, skeptics inside and outside of Aceh have voiced suspicions that GAM lowballed the number of weapons and personnel during negotiations in Helsinki to mask its strength and make it easier to rearm should the peace

process break down. While those complaints have subsided somewhat as the peace process progressed, by formally admitting to having more combatants than acknowledged in Helsinki, GAM's has re-opened the door for groups to reopen these allegations.

Pascoe